

Editorial

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The two papers of Hanne Albert et al. [1, 2] about Modic I changes of the vertebra published in the *European Spine Journal* of April 2013 have—in spite of a cautious editorial [3]—initiated an extensive discussion about both the value and significance of these research results as well as about conflicts of interests of the authors.

With the invited guest editorial by John O'Dowd and Adrian Casey from the UK and the answers of the authors to letters to the editor, the *European Spine Journal* tries to put the research results in the right perspectives to meet misunderstandings and too fast interpretations which have little to do with the presented facts.

With a statement as well as an answer to one of the letters to the editors by the principal author (H. A.), the *European Spine Journal* reacts on numerous accusations mainly from self-nominated moral preachers of the lay press that it has published the two papers without checking the disclosed “no conflict of interest” statement.

As Editor of the journal, my reply is twofold:

1. The quality and the originality of research are not less, even if the author has a so-called “conflict of interest”, more so when this “conflict of interest” has nothing to do with the process of research.
2. Every author who wants to publish a paper in the *European Spine Journal* has to sign a “no conflict of interest” statement before the paper is accepted for publication. The *European Spine Journal* has neither the capacity nor the size to check the truth of every author's statement. Here, we have to rely on the

honesty of the authors. If an author is not honest and lies to the journal, then this is his/her own responsibility. The journal can only ban such an author from future publishing in the *European Spine Journal* and in severe cases the journal may publicly announce the withdrawal of the publication in question. However, such a decision has to be proportional and is only justified when the conflict of interest manipulates the methodology and results, in other words, the quality and the honesty of the research data. This is clearly not the case in the two papers of H. Albert et al. It is not up to the lay and public press to make themselves the judges about content, which is geared towards a selective community, in this case the spine research community.

Conflict of interest None.

References

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